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# **Management-led interventions for workplace stress and mental health of academic staff in higher education: A systematic review**

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## **Abstract**

This systematic review focuses on management-led intervention strategies aimed at achieving stable mental wellbeing among academic staff in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) by reviewing and synthesising existing literature on varying intervention strategies to managing workplace stress and improving mental health. Twenty-two peer-reviewed articles were identified through databases (PsycARTICLES, PsycINFO, Business source complete, Academic search complete) and the application of the PRISMA guideline. A quality check was carried out on the selected articles and a data extraction table was developed to aid the discussion. Although the awareness of mental health is a global issue, there was minimal research evidence in managing stress and mental health among academic staff in HEIs through increased university management involvement. Most HEIs were more focused on corporatisation and student satisfaction while unconsciously neglecting its impact on the wellbeing of academic staff even though universities' management portray staff welfare as priority. There is limited information measuring the outcome of various management-led mental wellbeing strategies in HEIs. Further research applying more robust study design rather beyond self-reported questionnaires and similar study designs is needed in this area. Establishing routine mental health assessment, effective communication, continuous promotion of existing and available support is imminent to improve the mental wellbeing of academic staff by HEIs management. This is the first systematic review that describes and synthesises the various mental health triggers, including workplace stressors, that affect academic staff in higher education institutions (HEIs) and summarises various possible management intervention strategies.

**Keywords:** Workplace stress, mental health, academic staff, higher education institutions, management-led interventions, systematic review.

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## **Introduction**

Evidence shows a high prevalence rate of mental health issues globally among the working-class population in white collar jobs. Statistics reveal that 1 in 6 working age adults within the UK exhibit symptoms linked with mental health issues (Mental Health First Aid, MHFA England, 2017). While a variety of definitions for mental health and well-being exist, this paper describes it according to Galderisi et al., (2015) as that situation where an individual can create a healthy balance with their personal/internal surrounding and external surrounding some of which are beyond their control recognizing the different emotions that can be triggered, while managing them through developing functional coping mechanisms. According to findings from a UK national survey, Kinman and Court (2010) highlighted that more than 33% of all ill health incidences are attributable to work-related stress. This also affects organisational productivity and effectiveness in the workplace as 70 million working days are lost each year across the UK due to mental health problems, costing employers approximately £2.4 billion annually (Mental Health Foundation, 2019). This is also reiterated by the World Health Organisation (WHO) data indicating a cost of US\$ 1 trillion each year estimated to be lost as a result of mental health issues preventing work (Kestel, 2019). Considering its impact, research demands addressing these key concerns around mental health within the workplace.

Academic staff in higher education institutions (HEIs) are among the most hit by this trend as literature suggests that increasing workloads, poor work life balance, lack of management support and other factors results in workplace anxiety and stress which affect their mental wellbeing (Dickson-Swift et al., 2009; Ablanedo-Rosas et al., 2011; Dhanya and Kinslin, 2016; Schlevs et al., 2016). This is a growing concern as this is a challenge affecting academic staff in higher education institutions globally.

Management-led solutions to tackling the escalating levels of stress and anxiety for the academic staff working within universities is critical, due to their role within universities which demands a stable mental wellbeing and collaborative efforts from other staff and management to ensure the quality of educational services delivery. Hence, the management of HEIs have a duty to effectively promote a culture of good mental and physical health for the benefit of staff and the students alike. Promoting collaborative work whilst introducing innovative forms of support from the top, resulting in reduced workplace stress and increasing the possibilities of nurturing an atmosphere of positive mental health and wellbeing is seen as a management led intervention (Kenny and Fluck, 2014). For example, a study conducted by Hall (2017) suggests that the issue of mental wellbeing amongst the employees cannot be tackled in isolation without recognising the effect of the structure of an organisation or the influence which revolves around management. Also, evidence has shown that academic staff with mental health issues are not very comfortable disclosing or discussing this issue with the management and may suggest a broken tie with management, causing loss of integrity and trust (Flaherty, 2017).

The overall aim of this paper therefore is to highlight the importance of management-led intervention strategies and explore their impact in managing workplace stress within HEIs, with the purpose to suggest improvement strategies for the management of workplace stress to enhance the mental well-being of academic staff. Specific objectives to be addressed include to explore mental health issues among academic staff in higher education institutions, identify and explore factors contributing to workplace stress in higher education institutions and explore the impact of University management and influence of power and authority in combating these issues. Specific objectives to be addressed include exploring mental health issues among academic staff in higher education institutions and identifying factors contributing to workplace stress. To also explore these identified contributory factors and the impact of University management and influence in preventing these issues.

## Methodology

The systematic review process started with a scoping review to ascertain the depth of work that has been done previously in this area. Our findings established a growing body of literature discussing various interventions and strategies to support the mental well-being of academic staff, however, there was a lack of extensive numerical data and robust study measuring the impact of these interventions.

The PICO model (Population, Intervention, Comparison and Outcome) which was modified to PIOE (Population, Intervention, Outcome and Effect) was applied in dissecting the focus area. This was to aid in the identification of keywords to facilitate the search process. See Table I.

**Table I: Identification of search through PICO/PIOE model**

|                     |   |
|---------------------|---|
| <b>Population</b>   | Academic staff in higher education institutions |
| <b>Intervention</b> | Management led intervention, management support |
| <b>Outcome</b>      | Management of workplace stress                  |
| <b>Effect</b>       | Improved mental wellbeing/mental health         |

### *Inclusion and exclusion criteria*

This search process required the establishing of an inclusion and exclusion criteria to help create a focus and identify relevant articles for the systematic review (See Table II). The inclusion criteria focused on articles written in English and published between 2008 to 2019 with a focus on academic staff within HEIs worldwide. This expansion was as a result of the issue being identified as a growing public health concern worldwide. Articles not written in English including studies conducted within clinical settings were excluded. This was considered necessary as this study/review is focused on analysing the management and social

perspective of this problem to explore work practices that could be adjusted to improve the situation.

**Table II: Inclusion and exclusion criteria**

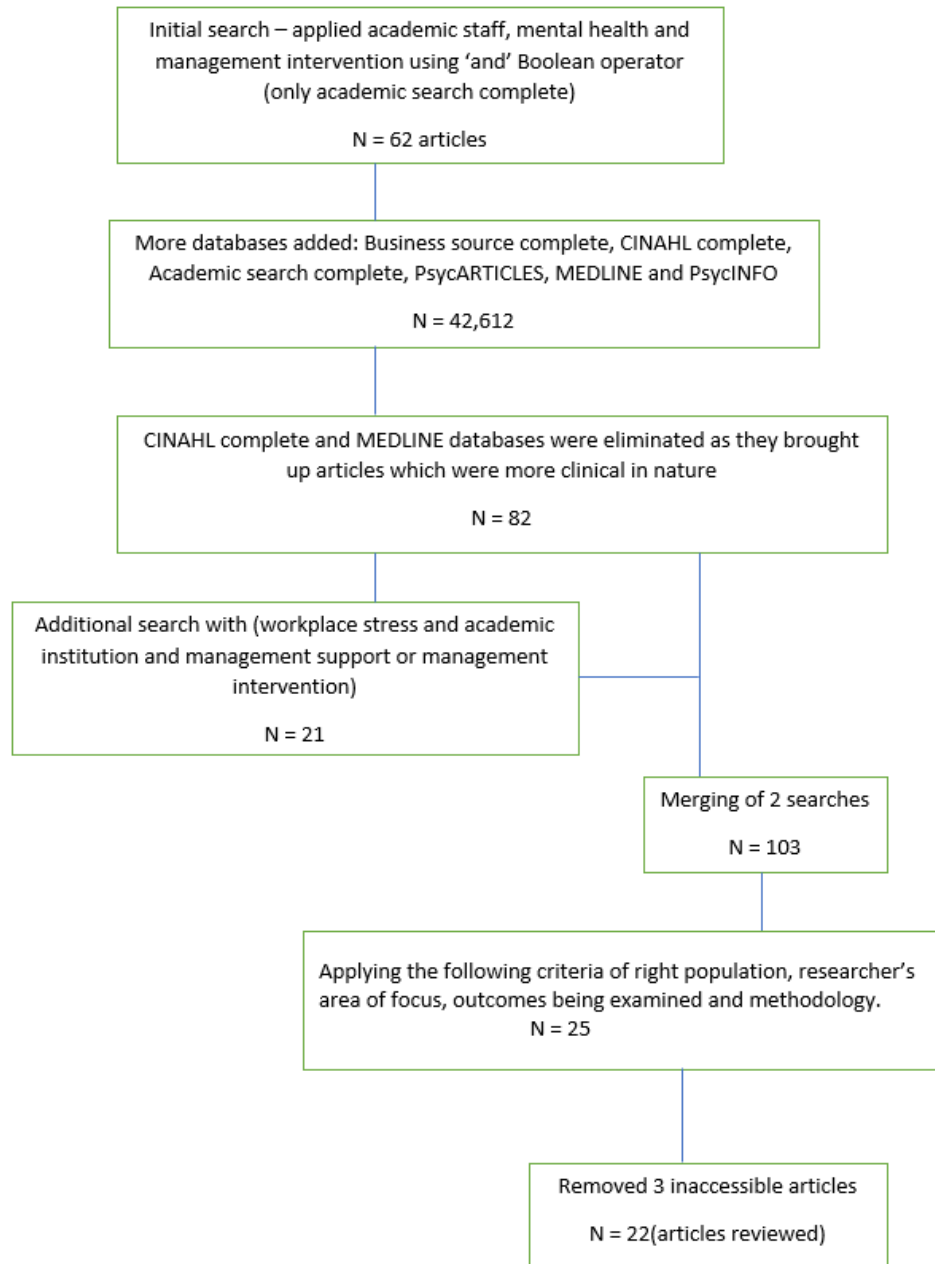
| <b>Items</b>         | <b>Inclusion</b>   | <b>Exclusion</b>   |
|----------------------|--|--|
| <b>Language</b>      | Articles written in English language   | Any material not written in English                                  |
| <b>Period</b>        | Articles written from 2008 to 2019   | Any publication written before 2008                                  |
| <b>Type</b>          | Academic peer reviewed articles  | Non-peer reviewed articles   |
| <b>Scope</b>         | Articles and research on employees in teaching positions anywhere in the world                             | Articles, research and studies on nonteaching institutions           |
| <b>Interventions</b> | Studies and recommendations from HEI setting focusing on academic staff                                    | Interventions not focused on academic staff in HEIs                  |
| <b>Study design</b>  | Qualitative, quantitative and mixed methodologies were accepted if they met other inclusion criteria above | Studies not meeting all the above inclusion criteria were eliminated |

The initial keywords combination as identified by the PIOE brought up only 62 articles from the search carried out on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of November 2019 as only the Academic search complete database was explored at that point. A further search was done using alternative words while accommodating other databases such as Business source complete, CINAHL complete, PsycARTICLES, MEDLINE and PsycINFO as the area in review bordered on health, business/management and psychology. This search brought up 42,612 articles. It was deemed necessary to eliminate CINAHL complete and MEDLINE databases (considering the exclusion criteria) as they brought up articles more clinical in nature bringing the number of relevant articles to 82. Further search was done incorporating the Boolean operators (AND & OR) with

the keywords from the PIOE, and 21 more articles were found. The search process was very rigorous considering that over 50 searches were carried out combining the keywords and their synonyms while maintaining very strict focus on the inclusion and exclusion criteria especially relating to academic staff and higher education institutions. All the searches combined resulted in a total of 103 articles.

A further screening was carried out by eliminating duplicates and reading their abstracts to ensure eligibility in terms of meeting the inclusion and exclusion criteria and its relevance to the review. Focus was kept on studies exploring workplace stress, mental wellbeing of academic staff in HEIs and various interventions and strategies that have been explored and implemented. There were 25 articles at the end. A data extraction table was prepared to summarise the information gathered from these articles which included author's details, sample size, methodology, key findings and interventions, outcomes, strengths and weaknesses of the articles including limitations (see data extraction table attached). During the data extraction, 3 articles were inaccessible even after applications were made to source them. Details of the process can be seen represented in the Fig I - PRISMA diagram. This was independently carried out by two reviewers to ensure standardisation and extraction of relevant information needed to support review, discussion, and synthesis.

**Figure I: PRISMA Diagram**



## Results

For the quality assessment of the articles, the Critical Appraisal Skills Programme (CASP) systematic review checklist was employed to assess the validity of the study in the selected peer reviewed articles, the results, and the impact of the results. The CASP checklist focuses on three broad issues and ten questions to be considered when appraising an article. This



enables the reviewer to identify the strengths, weaknesses, and limitations of each study/article. This assessment was carried out by two reviewers independently to ensure objectivity and the absence of bias. Responses to the CASP checklist questions supported the data extraction process. In the process of assessing the quality of the articles, one of the limitations observed was the low response rate amongst participants for the studies conducted. It was also identified that majority of the studies applied the self-reported design/method which failed to clearly monitor, measure, and evaluate the impact of suggested and implemented strategies.

This rigorous process enabled the identification of patterns present in these articles which facilitated the development of themes to aid in the review and create a focus. Patterns identified focused on various triggers and possible solutions which were classified into five broad themes: personal/work life balance, institutional, higher education corporatisation, other factors and management intervention strategies (see Table III).

**Table III: Findings from articles categorised into themes**

| <b>Work life balance</b> | <b>Institutional</b>            | <b>Corporatisation</b>                           | <b>Others (e.g. Government, Technology, Funding, etc.)</b> | <b>Intervention strategies</b>                                 |
|--------------------------|---------------------------------|--|--|--|
| Family conflict          | Work overload                   | Peer (university) competition)                   | Underfunding   | Writer's retreat to encourage publications and attract funding |
| Economic situation       | Role conflict                   | University ranking                               | GDPR   | Fostering collegiality and encouraging social support          |
| Poor physical health     | Lack of support from management | Visibility in the international education market | Compliance policies  | Implementing work life balance policies                        |
| Fear of inadequacy       | Lack of support from colleagues |  | Introduction of new systems requiring                      | Reduction in administrative tasks and recruiting more staff    |

|  |                                       |  |  |  |
|--|---------------------------------------|--|--|--|
|  |                                       |  | greater administrative duties              |  |
|  | Promotion tied to publishing articles |  | Continuous improved systems and technology | Combination of awareness campaign and trust building in respect to university management |
|  | Lack of trust and perception          |  |  | Increased staff participation in staff welfare decision making                           |
|  | Lack of reward and recognition        |  |  | Anonymous online and web based mental well-being surveys                                 |
|  |                                       |  |  | Introduction of Psychological Capital  |
|  |                                       |  |  | Introducing mindfulness sessions and stress management workshops.                        |

The following themes were devised considering the focus area of the review:

***Personal/Work life balance*** - stress triggers here are directly related to the individual and can predominantly be controlled by the individual themselves. Five of the articles focused more on these triggers and possible interventions.

***Institutional***: These triggers exist within the workplace and can be influenced by decisions and policies at work. Management can have control over them. Eight of the articles discussed the major stressors from the workplace.

***Higher Education Corporatisation***: These are the triggers being influenced by the effects of commercialising the higher education sector to attract more students and rank higher among other universities. Five of the articles discussed the impact of this issue.

***Others - Technological/ Government:*** These are triggers which are influenced by underfunding, technological trends or by government policies which the individual or management has little or no control over. Five articles discussed the impact of these issues

***Intervention Strategies:*** The discussion of this theme was as a result of various strategies which have been explored and implemented considering the different types of triggers identified in relation to the peculiarity or uniqueness of the environment where the challenge exists. All the articles discussed various interventions.

## **Discussion**

### ***Work-life balance and mental wellbeing***

Dhanya and Kinslin (2016) explain work-life balance as the stability in place between a person's job and personal life. Evidence suggests that ensuring a balanced and healthy personal and work life is particularly difficult amongst academic staff especially women (Kinman and Johnson, 2019). Comparing the work-life balance of several employees working in various other organisations with that of the academic staff, findings indicate more severe work-related pressures among those in the higher education sector (Langford, 2010). Although it appears that work-life balance is a person's choice or decision, Dhanya and Kinslin (2016) prescribes that it is the organisation's duty to initiate policies to support staff to achieve a balanced relationship between work and life. Consistent with the literature, a relationship exists between work-life balance and absenteeism. Stress impacts the performance of about half of employees which leads to absence from work and therefore will affect productivity in the workplace negatively (Pannu and Tikku, 2014; Catano et al., 2010). This highlighted the need for a series of stress management interventions to deal with this issue. The focus on academic staff in discussing this issue is attributed to the longer working hours and higher job demand

experienced as evidenced by research showing that academic staff are more affected by work-related stress (Kinman and Johnson, 2019).

### ***Institutional factors and mental wellbeing***

In a survey by Catano et al., (2010), investigating stress levels in the U.K, Canadian and Australian universities, results show staggeringly high occupational stress levels among the staff working within the higher education institutions as compared to the staff working elsewhere. Workplace stress was explained by Pannu and Tikku (2014) as a disparity between the demands made of someone and the input to respond to these demands. Workplace stress could also occur when an individual is not psychologically and physically able to cope with responsibilities in the workplace. The European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (EU-OSHA) highlighted the importance of providing a guide in organisations for managing workplace stress based on higher rates of workplace psychological fatalities identified (EU-OSHA, 2015). One of the major issues identified to affect the mental well-being of academic staff is the job demand and workload amongst other stressors (Kenny and Fluck, 2014).

A few studies have also shown that the job performance of staff may not be directly related to or influenced strictly by job stress. This was observed in a study by Foy (2015) and a study by Kumkum et al., (2016), which suggested that job stress could lead to increased job satisfaction as a little bit of stress could be motivational. According to the study which disputed the norm of attributing job satisfaction to level of workplace stress, it could be seen from the findings that the presence of social support made this difference. This may lead to the potential need and presence of management interventions in the workplace in terms of managing workplace stress (Kumkum et al., 2016). The stance of involving the management to address the mental health demands for the staff has been examined by various scholars to facilitate changes within an organisation in terms of addressing the needs of the staff. It may be observed from the literature that, the likelihood of involving the management and the staff towards promoting a

collaborative culture of support may lead to an enhancement of organisational culture and values (Passmore, 2019). This shift in the organisational culture may result in improving the workplace conditions for the staff whilst generating an atmosphere of trust and belief. The involvement of the management to demonstrate care and compassion whilst taking strategic actions to boost the staff morale within the workplace may lead to a positive change in addressing the mental health needs for the staff (Dickson-Swift et al., 2009; EU-OSHA, 2015).

### ***Higher Education Corporatisation and mental wellbeing***

Changes in the higher education sector have led to growing anxieties among academics which has resulted in escalating the levels of workplace stress (Dickson-Swift et al., 2009). Over the years, changes in the university's corporate structure and the need to rank higher amongst peers, has increased the job demand of academics, making them less efficient in the area of tutoring and research which is their original job role (Kenny and Fluck, 2014). This has triggered various stress-related issues which has simultaneously brought about physical and most especially emotional, psychological and mental health challenges (Bezuidenhout, 2015). Some of the changes is the increased focus of universities on promoting themselves in the international market while sourcing for more students. In meeting these demands, academics have experienced increasing workloads, longer working hours and the stress of not being able to publish articles as is expected and attract funding for the university. This has led to a significant negative effect on job promotion and job stability which in turn compromises the mental wellbeing of the academics (Dickson-Swift et al., 2009).

In a research conducted amongst 93 academic staff at various levels in their career, most of the respondents indicated that the robust changes in the higher education institutions in recent times, will be easier to manage if there were more input from management in terms of effective management, support towards managing workload, performance management, promoting job security and supporting research outputs (Pienaar and Bester, 2009). In addition to this, a range

of different modifications have been described in the literature to change the organisational culture in enhancing the mental health of the academic staff working within higher education institutions.

***Other factors – technological, government policies, GDPR, funding***

With the corporatisation of universities identified above coupled with reduced government funding, the current trend has become the commercialisation of universities to attract more students which materialises into more funding for the universities (Pop-Vasileva et al., 2011). This has not only resulted in increased workload, role conflict, increased administrative functions and job demand, it has also given rise to academic staff struggling to comply with new technological trends while adapting to ever changing government policies (Kenny and Fluck, 2014; Pignata et al., 2017). Hence, issues around government policies and austerity measures, funding and technological changes have put a lot of pressure on academic staff making efforts to cope with the current trend while ensuring they perform their basic functions of teaching and research. As work roles are beginning to change for academic staff based on ability to attract more funding to the university, more academic staff are having to play multiple roles including having to teach online and bid for tenders. Teaching online for instance, requires academic staff to redesign curriculums, stay up to date with technological trends and systems and increase their availability and student support (Bezuidenhout, 2015). According to research, having to lecture over a distance requires more time and effort than teaching in a regular classroom. However, considering keeping a job to be able to earn a living, academic staff continue to manage these workloads which end up affecting their mental wellbeing leading to the negative perception of management by staff as they consider the work environment unfriendly (Bezuidenhout, 2015). For those unable to cope, the situation has warranted the exit from academia. This is a cause for alarm as management invests a lot in the

recruitment process of academic staff, therefore retention strategies should be planned for (Ryan et al., 2012).

A survey of Australian universities conducted by Langford (2010) found that the most common cause of increased workload was lack of funding. Also, other scholars have reiterated the effects of budget cuts and its negative impact on academic staff turnover (Ryan et al., 2012; Jones et al., 2014). Hence, the impact of funding issues due to government austerity measure and new funding strategies of HEIs is a major source of academic staff mental health challenge and a lack in job satisfaction.

### ***Interventions and strategies***

Considering the triggers identified above, some of the pointers to the lack of workplace stress management tend towards the lack of awareness of stress reduction strategies. According to Pignata and Winefield (2015) on a study conducted in an Australian university, employees who were aware of stress reduction strategies in place at work scored higher in terms of overall work fulfilment and work commitment. Even though this study appears to be positive, when it came to managing strain from work pressure, the awareness of these interventions in the workplace on its own did not help with promoting mental wellbeing. Dhanya and Kinslin (2016) and Pignata and Winefield (2015) posits that emphasis in managing people through developing supportive managers and establishing work-life policies as well as ensuring that it is integrated into the organisation is paramount.

In terms of management taking the initiative to counteract the stressful situations for staff within academic institutions, management-led strategies have proved to be successful in terms of addressing various issues for the academic staff as the institutional triggers are the ones within the control of management. Any activity championed by management aimed at

managing work related stress to assist academic staff deal with all the negative impact is considered a management-led intervention focused on workplace stress (Pignata et al., 2016).

Management-led interventions such as training exercises, psychological capital, stress management programmes, mindfulness sessions, writer's retreat, structured workload allocation, use of Delphi technique and employee assistance programmes have been identified to lead to a change in the organisational culture and values, resulting in job stress reduction and a perceived positive impact on the work life balance of the academics (Passmore, 2019; Wongtongkam et al., 2017; Kinman and Court, 2010; Pignata and Winefield, 2015; Pienaar and Bester, 2009; Kirrane et al., 2017). According to research, Australian universities have taken the initiative to address both the causes of stress and the consequences of stress on the academic staff. Some of the key components of the strategies applied included vocational counselling, leadership trainings, reward mechanisms, improving communication whilst increasing the trust and loyalty. The most helpful aspect of these stress intervention strategies was the enhancement in the staff's job satisfaction and emotional wellbeing through the instrumental support being gained from the management (Pignata and Winefield, 2015). Also, Kinman and Court (2010) have recommended a high level of management support and dedication towards achieving these interventions to manage workplace stress.

The role of management in this situation is essential in terms of changing the organisational culture, mindset and perception to bring about a positive impact in the life of both the academic staff and the management (Kirrane et al 2017). A key factor to this approach will be the involvement of academic staff in the construction of solutions to these challenges as they are in the best position to understand the nature and magnitude of the challenges (Pienaar and Bester, 2009). Therefore, there is the need for tailor made approaches towards managing mental wellbeing of academic staff as findings (e.g. Kirrane et al., 2017; Pop-Vasileva et al., 2011)



have shown that response to workplace stress varies from individual, faculty, school and location due to the uniqueness of each one.

## **Conclusion**

This is the first systematic review that describes and synthesises the various mental health triggers, including workplace stressors, that affect academic staff in higher education institutions (HEIs) and summarises various possible intervention strategies to manage them. Bearing in mind the findings and review, it was observed that though management intervention strategies will be beneficial to support the mental health of academic staff and increase job satisfaction and emotional wellbeing, the lack of awareness of already existing strategies in place at the institutions could be a contributory factor to the rise in poor mental health of academic staff. This could be linked to either poor communication or the lack of it between university management and academic staff. Good communication is essential for building good working relationship and trust among management and employees, as well as for increasing loyalty and integrity which have both direct and indirect benefit to occupational health.

Considering that the benchmark minimum required by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) UK for management of work-related stressors in the higher education sector in relation to perceived level of support from senior management fell short of the 85% benchmark to reveal 19% (Kinman and Court, 2010, p.416), there is an urgent need to introduce management-led interventions to deal with workplace stress and managing mental wellbeing of academic staff in HEIs as there is a great disparity.

The lack of implementable strategies could lead to a decrease in the productivity level and high turnover rate amongst academic staff in pursuit of job satisfaction leading to more spending on recruiting staff replacements, disruption in HEI programmes and negative impact on student satisfaction. Priority should therefore be on developing strategies and activities which would

focus on managing these challenges and improving the relationship between university management and academic staff to build back trust and loyalty. These could be in the form of awareness creation of available mental wellbeing initiatives, routine wellbeing checks, mindfulness sessions, making provision for writers retreat and ensuring that academic staff members become high priority stakeholders in these plans.

As observed, no specific strategy is a one size fits all for an organisation to manage workplace stress (Hassard and Cox, 2015). Having this knowledge that interventions are based on the uniqueness of each organisation, it would be suggestive to note that deciding on management-led intervention(s) that are practical, feasible and implementable would most likely be influenced by the involvement of all stakeholders.

Although most of the reviewed articles have noted the advantages of these interventions, there is limited information measuring the outcome of various management-led mental wellbeing strategies implemented within academic institutions. More extensive research focused on gathering credible and stronger evidence through the application of a more robust study design rather than self-reported questionnaires and similar study designs is needed in future research in this area. Also, the possibility of an increase in sample size and researching the reasons behind low response rates from academic staff in this area of research should be investigated. Further study to explore the outcome of the implementation of these suggested strategies in measuring the impact and exploring the challenges encountered will be pertinent as this was a limitation in most of the articles available.

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## DATA EXTRACTION TABLE OF INCLUDED ARTICLES FOR LITERATURE REVIEW

| S/<br>N | Author,<br>year,<br>place                   | Sample<br>size | Study Design   | Findings and Interventions  | Outcomes   | Strengths   | Weaknesses  |
|---------|---|----------------|--|---|--|---|---|
| 1.      | Dickson-Swift et al.<br>(2009)<br>Australia | 9              | Qualitative  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>. Writer's Retreat as time off from regular work.</li> <li>. Careful management of timetabling to allow staff more time to write.</li> <li>. Fostering collegiality through interaction and support for each other.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>. Constructive focus was achieved</li> <li>. Teamwork and bonding</li> <li>. Increase in academic publication</li> <li>. More promotions</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>. Literature search was done by 2 authors.</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>. Small sample size</li> <li>. Results were not numerically represented.</li> </ul>  |
| 2       | Dhanya & Kinslin<br>(2016)<br>India         | 56             | Judgemental sampling method and descriptive research design. Questionnaires.   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>. The implementation of work life balance policies.</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>. Lack of awareness of WLB policies in place</li> <li>. Meditation and entertainment as a means of relieving stress.</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>. A list of SMART recommendations was made.</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>. Lack of anonymity which may hinder honest expressions.</li> <li>. The author failed to mention if approval was needed or made.</li> </ul>                                    |
| 3       | Pienaar & Bester<br>(2009)<br>South Africa  | 93             | Delphi technique – questionnaire, Empirical Study; Qualitative Study.  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>. Adoption of positive psychology approach</li> <li>. Reduction in unnecessary administrative tasks and meetings</li> <li>. Recruiting more staff</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>. Identification of increasing workloads</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>. Approval was obtained</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>. Conclusion cannot be drawn from Study conducted on only one university</li> </ul>  |
| 4       | Pignata et al.<br>(2016)<br>Australia       | 869            | . Social exchange theoretical framework. Questionnaires.   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>. Although having the awareness made a positive impact, the presence of trust and justice/due process enhanced the impact when combined with awareness.</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>. Intervention awareness is linked to improved wellbeing, trust towards senior management, procedural justice and affective commitment.</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>. Participation was anonymous as codes were used.</li> <li>. Low level of attrition bias.</li> <li>. No conflict of interest</li> </ul>                      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>. Possible bias due to the application of self-reported questionnaire.</li> <li>. There was no mention of obtaining approval.</li> </ul>                                       |
| 5       | Langford<br>(2010)<br>Australia             | 26,226         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>. Questionnaire, Voice climate survey. Qualitative study.</li> <li>. To measure the level of occupational stress amongst academic staff compared to other industries or sectors.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>. Higher rate of occupational stress amongst academic staff.</li> <li>. Low level of involvement in decision making by academic staff causing dissatisfaction with management.</li> <li>. Increased workload.</li> </ul>       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>. Benchmarking to be used as it helps set targets towards best practice.</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>. Large sample size suggesting reliability</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>. Failed to research the impact of various changes in the higher education institutions and how management can support staff to deal with these identified changes.</li> </ul> |
| 6       | EU-OSHA<br>(2015)<br>Europe                 | N/A            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>. Assessment tool</li> <li>. Provision of an e-guide for managing workplace stress</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>. Higher daily deaths and injury counts.</li> <li>. Fatalities should be reported within 8 hours of incident</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>. A free tool which is an e-guide by the European Agency for Occupational Safety and health at work offering tips and information on psychosocial risks and work related stress; its awareness, understanding and management of these issues.</li> </ul>        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>. Simple to use and accessible to EU member states</li> <li>. Practicability</li> <li>. Reference to national legislation and available resources</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>. The possibility of BREXIT may make the tool unavailable in the UK.</li> </ul>  |
| 7       | Ryan, Healy & Sullivan,<br>(2011)<br>USA    | 2904           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>. HERI faculty survey.</li> <li>. Exploratory factor analysis.</li> <li>. Exploring factors that generally and specifically affect employee turnover.</li> </ul>                            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>. On all aspects, workplace stress and a lack of perceived support came up amongst other reasons for employee turnover.</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>. Scholarly productivity has been a strong reason for staff intention to leave an institution.</li> <li>. There is the suggestion of benchmarking for best practices in the implementation of friendly policies to relieve stress in academic staff.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>. Article analysed workplace stress and employee turnover from various perspectives.</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>. The application of generalisation in a non-random study may cause bias. Research was carried out at just one institution.</li> </ul>   |

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|----|--|------|---|--|---|---|--|
| 8  | Jones et al (2014)<br>USA                          | 114  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>. Cross sectional survey</li> <li>. Qualitative</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>. Anonymous web-based survey</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>. Budget cuts negatively impact commitment to university and engagement in research activities</li> <li>. Emotional exhaustion mostly strongly associated with workload</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>. There was a follow up process during data collection</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>. No record of applying for approval was seen</li> <li>. The response rate was below average which may bias conclusion from the response received.</li> </ul>                     |
| 9  | Kumkum , Singh and Rajpoot (2016)<br>India         | 30   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>. Questions and scales.</li> <li>. The relationship between workplace stress and social support from management. How job dissatisfaction can cause workplace stress</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>. Social support is believed to bridge the gap between negative aspects of work and job satisfaction.</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>. Job stress lead to increased job satisfaction possibly because of the presence of social support.</li> </ul>   |   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>. Small sample size</li> </ul>  |
| 10 | Bezuidenhout (2015)<br>South Africa                | 404  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>. A quantitative, cross-sectional self-report survey design was employed. A stratified random sampling technique</li> <li>. Exploring the implications of changing work roles and workload for a faculty in ODL university.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>. Multiple work role expected in online teaching has a negative effect on the wellbeing and mental health of academic staff.</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>. Policy development to support a healthy workload allocation for distance educators.</li> <li>. Creating supporting tools for distance educators through educational technology training and ongoing technological support and digital literacy.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>. Random sampling technique which reduces bias was applied to also allow for generalisation of result</li> <li>. A lot of evidence and articles supporting the article.</li> <li>. Informed consent and ethical approval were obtained.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>. The application of self-report surveys which may represent biased viewpoints.</li> </ul>  |
| 11 | Pignata, Boyd, Winefield et al (2017)<br>Australia | 462  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>. Qualitative study.</li> <li>. Questionnaire</li> <li>. Cross sectional survey.</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Key perceived stressors: Competition, Internationalization, Technological advancement, reduced government financial support, etc.</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>. Reduced stress due to increased staffing</li> <li>. Supportive interpersonal relationship at work</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>. Thematic analysis was applied in discussion</li> <li>. Survey was anonymous</li> <li>. Article has been disseminated at conferences and seminars</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>. Face to face interviews is suggested for more detailed responses (this may bring about subjective responses)</li> </ul>   |
| 12 | Kirrane et al, (2017)<br>Ireland                   | 120  | Structural Equation Modelling (Questionnaires)  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>. Role of Psychological capital (PsyCap) as a mediator between perceived management support and staff readiness for change. What can influence reception towards change? The need for tailored interventions to be employed.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>. Employees response to change are influenced by their personal psychological response and organisational perception.</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>. Detailed research process and clear results</li> <li>. Robust critique of studies earlier done</li> <li>. Participants consent and approval was sought</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>. Failed to clearly identify organisation though appeared higher educational focused from the text and authors backgrounds.</li> <li>. Low participants response rate.</li> </ul> |
| 13 | Foy (2016)<br>Ireland                              | 1420 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>. Correlation Study.</li> <li>. To provide management with the knowledge to assess the perception of social support and its impact on workplace stress and job performance.</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Minimal research available on the relationship between workplace stress and management support highlighting various strategies that could be implemented.</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>. Results will enable leaders in the education sector to pursue social change through ensuring social support, work life strategies and potential opportunities to reduce workplace stress which will improve the quality of life of staff.</li> </ul>       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sample size was reasonable.</li> </ul>   |  |
| 14 | Passmore (2019)                                    |      | Qualitative study (open-ended questions)  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>. Employing mindfulness which is a relatively new strategy to manage organisational development and wellbeing in the organisation.</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>. Fresh insights were seen by leaders</li> <li>. Mindfulness techniques currently a unique choice observed to manage distractions, stress, fatigue and conflict and wellbeing.</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>. Detailed mention of limitations/ hesitations to intervention</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>. Did not have proper evidenced data even though it discussed it.</li> <li>.</li> </ul>   |



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|----|---|---------------------------|--|--|---|---|--|
| 15 | Catano, Francis, Haines et al (2010) Canada | 1440-1470                 | Qualitative study using Web based questionnaire  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>. Sampling techniques with questions at different stages using online survey to gather and analyse information to help make informed decisions</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>. High levels of work-related stress; work-life conflict identified as being the most consistent factor in measuring work-health balance.</li> <li>. Management perception was not very good.</li> <li>. Relationship between academic rank, status and job satisfaction.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>. Consent was sought from participants</li> <li>. Study was detailed and analytical</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>. Slight inconsistency in sample size presented</li> <li>. Low response rate</li> </ul>   |
| 16 | Pannu & Tikku, (2014 India)                 | N/A                       | . Applied available existing statistics  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>. Very detailed interventions to manage workplace stress identified as personal mindfulness, improving communication, exercises, networking &amp; socialising, supportive organisational climate from management amongst others.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>. More attention to be paid to female absenteeism</li> <li>. A positive work environment encourages staff to get involved</li> <li>. Recognition of work overload and staff rewarded accordingly as its absence can lead to resentment towards management.</li> </ul>                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>. Aims &amp; objectives were clearly defined</li> <li>. Stressors and suggested management measures where clearly outlined.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>. Sample size unspecified even though result of a finding was given.</li> </ul>   |
| 17 | Kinman & Court (2010) UK                    | 9740                      | Online survey. Qualitative study. HSE management standards indicator tool.   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>. Minimum standard recommended by health and safety for managing workplace stress in academic institutions</li> <li>. Quality of interpersonal relationships and management support at work failed to reach minimum standard.</li> </ul>    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>. The application of the HSE risk assessment approach to identify stressors, enhance employee well-being and manage workplace stress.</li> <li>. Management commitment suggested towards stress management.</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>. Participation was voluntary</li> <li>. Detailed analysis of participants characteristics</li> </ul>                                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>. Response rate was a bit low – 23.4%</li> <li>. Self-report methodology was used which may be biased.</li> </ul>   |
| 18 | Kinman & Johnson, (2019) UK                 | 1474<br>2821<br>458<br>39 | . Quality of work life tool, A shortened stress evaluation tool.   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>. Highlighted the need for different stress management initiatives addressing specific risk factors.</li> <li>. Provided insight into role of resilience amongst academic staff.</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>. Mention was made on the lack of targeted interventions to improve the wellbeing of academic staff.</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>. Identified the possibilities of a wide range of intervention strategies.</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>. Failed to discuss findings of interventions in detail.</li> </ul>   |
| 19 | Pignata & Winefield, (2015) Australia       | 247                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>. Mixed method</li> <li>. The impact of the awareness of stress reduction strategies on employees.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>. Management influence as a way of reducing stress.</li> <li>. Increasing staff awareness of Employee assistance programs.</li> <li>.</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>. Awareness of intervention strategies alone did not make any impact on managing work strain. Key stressors identified as workload and staffing pressures.</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>. Informed consent was obtained for the face to face interview</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>. The use of self-reported tools to measure psychosocial factors which may be biased.</li> <li>. Lack of follow up</li> <li>. No mention of informed consent or ethical approval</li> </ul> |
| 20 | Kenny & Fluck (2014) Australia              | 285                       | Questionnaire Participatory action research. Mixed method study.   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>. Findings established the need for staff involvement in effective workload allocation decisions.</li> <li>. Doubts about effectiveness of time-based approaches to managing workload as they are difficult to enforce.</li> </ul>          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>. More balanced workload required more cost investment.</li> <li>. Workload pressure affected research performance</li> <li>. More staff involvement in the development of workload allocation models needed</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>. Ethical approval was obtained</li> <li>. Follow up plan in place</li> <li>. Response rate was reasonable</li> </ul>                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>. Possibility of bias due to research design</li> </ul>   |
| 21 | Wongtonkam et al., (2017) Australia         | 15                        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>. Empirical study, mixed method. Interview.</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>. Employee assistance programs (mindfulness sessions, yoga, meditation)</li> <li>.</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>. The intervention was calming, and supported the ability to manage stressful situations</li> <li>. Improved sleep quality.</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>. The use of mixed method to provide good insight and understanding into benefits.</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>. Mainstreaming plan was not discussed.</li> <li>. Small sample size</li> <li>. Pilot study</li> </ul>  |

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|----|--|-----|---|---|---|---|--|
| 22 | Pop-<br>Vasileva,<br>Baird &<br>Blair<br>(2011)<br>Australia | 750 | . Questionnaire analysing<br>work-related attitudes of<br>academic staff in relation to<br>organisational and<br>demographic factors. | . Findings revealed high levels of job stress<br>being influenced by management style and<br>support.<br>. Work-related stress differed between<br>faculties. | . Information obtained from research<br>will assist management in developing<br>policies to support staff | . Reliability tests were carried<br>out to test measures used.<br>. | . Findings cannot be generalised due to<br>the sample characteristics.<br>. Reliance on self- reported data giving<br>room for bias. |
|----|--|-----|---|---|---|---|--|